

Serial No. 10/718,670  
Attorney Docket No. 01-520RCE

### **REMARKS**

Please consider the following comments. Following this response, claims 8-15 are pending. The applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of this application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks:

#### ***Interview***

The applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for the telephonic interview on January 9, 2006. This response addresses the issues that were discussed during this interview.

#### ***Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103***

The Examiner has rejected claims 8-15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over Lynn Woods "Getting there via computer – computerized mapping software ..." ("Lynn Woods"), in view of United States Patent No. 6,622,085 to Amita et al. ("Amita").

By this response, the applicant has amended claims 8-13 and 15 to better recite the present claimed invention. In particular, amended claim 8 recites a map data storing unit for storing a plurality of stored information items, each of the plurality of stored information items being assigned to one of a plurality of possible search areas.

Applicants have added a recitation of an area-designating information storage unit for storing a plurality of area-designating information items, each of the plurality of stored area-designating information items identifying one of the plurality of search areas, and have noted that the designating unit designates a first search area as a target search area for retrieval, the first search area being chosen from the plurality of possible search areas.

The recitation of the retrieving unit is then amended to note that it is configured to search the target search area and retrieve one of the plurality of stored information items assigned to the target search area. An input unit is then recited for receiving an input item, the input item

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including a search area-designating information item, and a switching determination unit for determining whether the search area-designating item identifies the target search area.

Amended claim 8 then recites a search-area switching unit for switching the target search area from the first search area to a second search area associated with the search area-designating information item, when the switching determination unit determines that the search area-designating item does not identify the target search area, the second search area being chosen from the plurality of possible search areas.

These amendments make it clear that in the recited invention, there are multiple search areas, and that a feature of the invention is that a search-area switching unit can automatically switch a target search area from a first search area to a second search area when the current search terms belong to a search area other than the target search area. This can be seen by way of example in Applicants' FIG. 2 and page 12, lines 13-19, of the applicant's specification. As shown here, the system determines whether a second, designated, search area is the same as a first, targeted, search area. When the second search area is determined to be different from the first search area, the targeted search area is switched from the first search area to the second search area.

Nothing in Lynn Woods or Amita discloses or suggests this feature. In particular, nothing in either of these documents discloses or suggests the use of an area-designating information storage unit, a switching determination unit, or a search-area switching unit, as recited in claim 1. Neither Lynn Woods nor Amita disclose or suggest that map data be split up into multiple search areas, each identified by an area-designating item. And since the map data is not split up in this way, the disclosed systems have no need to switch between different search areas, nor to keep track of or compare area-designating items.

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The Examiner acknowledges that Lynn Woods does not expressly disclose switching search areas, but relies upon Amita for a teaching of this feature from claim 8 prior to its amendment. However, a careful examination of Amita will show that this is not the case.

The Examiner cites column 2, lines 17-31 and column 27, lines 1-31 of Amita as showing the previously-recited switching elements. But these portions of Amita refer simply to an alteration in search scale and data connection, not search area.

Regarding search scale, the Examiner cites portions of Amita that specifically note that electronic maps can provide convenient functions such as alterations in scale, and observes that it is necessary that there be a logical connection between the respective roads on the maps of the different scales. (See, e.g., Amita, column 2, lines 17-31.) But maps of different scale are not the same as different search areas, as recites in claim 8. A change in scale implies the same geographical data but in a different degree of detail.

Regarding data connection, the Examiner cites portions of Amita that disclose a polygonal road network data 803 in which node shape data in conventional road network data constructed from nodes and links is changed from point data to intersection polygon data prepared by the method of the present invention, and the link shape data is changed from line segment data to pure road polygon data prepared by the method of the present invention. (See, e.g., Amita, column 27, lines 1-31.) Nothing in this disclosure implies that the two types of data correspond to different search areas, just a different format. And while changing a data connection type may allow some different display options, it is not the same as switching search areas, as recited in claim 8.

Therefore, for at least the reasons given above, neither Lynn Woods nor Amita, alone or in combination, disclose or suggest the features of amended claim 8.

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Claims 9-14 depend variously from claim 8 and are allowable for at least the reasons given above for claim 8.

Amended claim 15 recites a search area designating method used in a map search system that stores (i) a plurality of information items, each of the plurality of information items being assigned to one of a plurality of search areas, and (ii) a plurality of stored search area-designating items, each of the plurality of stored search area-designating items identifying one of the plurality of search areas.

In operation, a designated first search area is selected from the plurality of search areas as a target search area for retrieval, and an input item is received, the input item including a search area-designating information item. The method then determines whether the search area-designating information item identifies the target search area. If the search area-designating information item is determined to not identify the target search area, then the target search area is switched from the first search area to a second search area, the second search area being associated with the search area-designating information item, the second search area being selected from the plurality of search areas.

For reasons analogous to those given above for claim 8, just as Lynn Woods and Amita, alone or in combination, do not disclose the elements for performing this process, so too they do not disclose the process itself. In particular, nothing in Lynn Woods or Amita discloses or suggests switching the search area from a first to a second search area when an input area-designating information item does not correspond to the first search area.

Thus, the applicant asserts that the combination of Lynn Woods and Amita cited by the Examiner does not disclose or suggest the present claimed invention, as recited in claims 8-15. The applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejection of claims 8-15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being allegedly anticipated by Lynn Woods in view of Amita.

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***Image File Wrapper***

The applicant observes that in the image file wrapper associated with this application, the current Office Action has as its eighth page a copy of the drawing page including FIGs. 3 and 4. Because the Office Action outlines no pending drawing objection, the applicant assumes that this drawing page was included with the image of the Office Action in error.

The applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner clarify this issue in the next action. If the Examiner has identified any issues with respect to FIG. 3 or FIG. 4, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner provide adequate details to allow the applicants to respond. If not, Applicants request that the Examiner indicate that the additional drawing sheet was incorrectly attached to this office action.

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***Conclusion***

For all the reasons advanced above, the applicant respectfully submits that pending claims 8-15 are allowable.

In view of the foregoing, the applicant respectfully submits that this application is in condition for allowance. A timely notice to that effect is respectfully requested. If questions relating to patentability remain, the examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone.

Please charge any unforeseen fees that may be due to Deposit Account No. 50-1147.

Respectfully submitted,



Brian C. Altmiller  
Reg. No. 37,271

Posz Law Group, PLC  
12040 South Lakes Drive, Suite 101  
Reston, VA 20191  
Phone 703-707-9110  
Fax 703-707-9112  
Customer No. 23400

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